TL650

EAST TIMOR TALKS COMMITTEE

Report of meeting held 12 August 1991

The meeting was held at the Uniting Church, 124 Napier St, Fitzroy. Chair: Pat Walsh.

1. Present: Peg Fitzgerald, Jose Pires, Amandio Gomes, Joaquim Santos, Adriano Araujo, Ana Iape, Louise Byrne, Judy Gunson, Francisco Soares, Patsy Thatcher, Panchi Kong, Adrian Davies, Helen Vaughan, Paul Stewart, Pat Walsh, Abel Guterres, Emilia Pires, David Buller, Nicola Seaman, John Sinnott.

2. Apologies: George Tieman, Shirley Shackleton, Betty Rouch, David Scott, Eliza Lay, Vicky Tchong, Alfredo Pires (Sr).

3. UN Decolonisation Committee: Merrill Findlay, a member of the Talks Campaign committee, addressed the UN on 7 August on behalf of ACFOA. Funding was provided by ACFOA with support from AETA. Merrill's statement focussed on Xanana Gusmao's talks initiative and was well received. The UN press statement on the proceedings headlined the talks project and devoted the bulk of its content to the proposal.(Copy attached) Indonesian diplomats were present. 18 petitioners addressed the Committee on behalf of East Timor including representatives of UDT (Joao Carrascalao) and Fretilin. Merrill also had discussions on the talks proposal with Soviet and other diplomats, including a member of the Australian UN mission (Mr Griffen).

4. Inaugural meeting of IFET: petitioners to the UN Decolonisation Committee used their time in New York to have the first meeting of the new International Federation for East Timor (IFET). IFET is a European/Japanese solidarity groups initiative. Merrill Findlay briefed the meeting on the talks campaign. IFET released a media statement (prepared by Merrill) which incorporated the text of Xanana Gusmao's most recent appeal through Japanese supporters for support for the talks process. Xanana called on the UN Secretary-General to include 'representatives of the East Timorese people' at the conference table and reiterated his commitment to 'dialogue'. (The press release is attached) Merrill emphasised a point already made in earlier minutes that an easttimor conference is available on computer to Pegasus subscribers, and that this is a cheap and quick way of facilitating international communication on the talks campaign. The ACFOA talks discussion paper and minutes of meetings are being regularly summarised on Pegasus. Membership of IFET is open to all solidarity groups. AETA has joined.

5. Campaign resources: message postcards to the UN and Bob Hawke to be ready by 16 August. More endorsements of prominent people are required before the leaflet (the principal PR item) can be printed. Other countries will be urged to print their own postcards and leaflets in their own language, but using essentially the same message. (Copies of the postcards are attached).

6. Proposal for national 'talks' tour by Jose Ramos Horta:
The Australian Freedom from Hunger Campaign has offered to tour Jose nationally to promote the talks proposal and seek support for it within the wider community. AFFHC would cover the cost of Jose's national airfare. It is proposed the tour take place approximately October 1 - October 16. (A tentative program is attached) Pat Walsh will check with groups interstate.

7. Sydney and Canberra: Pat reported on his recent visit to Sydney and Canberra (report already circulated). He noted (1) that direct face to face discussions with people on the talks proposal is essential to provoke discussion, to engage, and to clarify ideas and commitment. (2) that this sort of activity should be a campaign priority, (3) that there will be a public meeting in Sydney on 28 August (initiated by CAA) to explain the talks proposal and establish a Sydney working committee.

8. Cultural activity: Louise Byrne reported that a group is preparing a special Mass to be held to mark December 7. It was noted that this should coordinate with events planned for Canberra. It was asked how the Mass will promote the talks initiative and fit in with a possible visit to Australia by Mgr Belo.

9. Church: Francisco Soares (Perth Fretilin committee) asked about relations between the Catholic Church in East Timor and the Church in Australia. It was decided this was not directly relevant to planning around the talks project but could be made the subject of a special meeting if requested. Pat Walsh briefly referred to an initiative to establish a Church based project to promote inter-church solidarity and said that Mgr Belo had recently told an Australian visitor (Professor Anthony Reid) that he wanted closer relations with the Church in Australia. George Tieman reported an initiative to have the talks proposal adopted by the Uniting Church synod in Victoria.

10. Fretilin concerns: Francisco Soares (Fretilin Coordinator, Perth) explained he and others were unhappy with the mention of 'free association' being the possible subject of talks in the booklet East Timor: Towards a Just Peace in the 1990s. He said that because Indonesia was the East Timorese people's number one enemy, it was impossible to think of any form of 'federation'. Pat said the document was a discussion paper that did not commit anyone to a position, including ACFOA, and that it was important people discussed its contents. The sole objective of the booklet was to present the case for Xanana's talks initiative in the more favourable international climate. The campaign was a campaign for talks not free association, integration, or independence. What was talked about, assuming the campaign achieved its ambitious objective, was entirely a matter for the East Timorese whose continuing resistance and right to self-determination is the basis of the booklet. The campaign leaflet, when published, will focus on the need for talks not their content. Abel Guterres said the campaign was a support groups campaign, not a Fretilin or UDT project, but Fretilin in Melbourne wanted to be fully involved in it.

11. New Zealand: David Buller, just returned from NZ, reported on meetings with church (Kevin McBride, Tim Howard) and solidarity people (Helen Yensen) on the talks proposal.. Peacelink NZ have published a special report on East Timor. Jim Anderton of the New Labor Party is supportive. However, Fran Wilde (NZLabor) was negative and David Lange cancelled his appointment. Minutes of campaign should be sent to Tim Howard and Helen Yensen.

12. Benefit: Paul Stewart updated the meeting on the benefit featuring seven bands and an East Timorese group that will be held at the Royal Derby Hotel on 18 August. Leaflets advertising the event have already been distributed. Considerable time was spent organising doorkeepers, promotions and other matters.

13. Community Aid Abroad: David and Pat reported on their meeting with Andrew Hewitt and Jeff Atkinson (CAA Public Policy Unit). Undertakings

were given to put the talks proposal to the CAA National Executive for adoption as policy and to run articles in Campaign Update and CAA Review. Assistance was given in identifying prominent people who might endorse the campaign. Contact to be made with Victorian CAA re briefings for suitable groups. CAA will not, however, campaign on the talks proposal.

14. Fund-raising: there is a pressing need for funds as the campaign moves into its operational phase. For example, the cost of printing the message postcards will be $2000 plus.
Fund-raising projects underway are as follows:

1. Mini-raffle: mentioned in last minutes. If you can sell tickets, please contact the ACFOA office on 417 7505.

2. Benefit: 18 August, Royal Derby.

3. PET collection: $330 has already been contributed. Many thanks. Garrie Gibson MP has been asked to coordinate a new collection.

4. Brunswick Social Justice Group: donation of $50. Many thanks.

5. Leaflet: the campaign leaflet will ask for donations as a practical way in which people can assist the campaign.

6. Cake contest: Emilia Pires will talk to Julia Barbosa about organising a cake cooking competition within the East Timorese community.

7. Tom Nesbitt: donation of $200. Many thanks, Tom.

8. World's Greatest Chocolate: it was decided to go ahead with this true and tried fund-raising project. The East Timor talks campaign will be printed on the wrapper of each of the 720 bars (gasp!) to be sold. If you can sell chocolate for the campaign, please contact tel. 417 7505.

9. Have a ball for Timor: Judy Gunson is discussing with others the possibility of a fund-raising ball.

There was discussion with Helen Vaughan about the pros and cons of a coordinated committee to do more in this fund-raising area, but it was felt more than enough was already underway!

15. New structure: Louise Byrne outlined to the meeting a proposal for a new campaign structure and timetable. The main features of the new structure are (1) a management committee; (2) a predominant role for members of the East Timorese community; and (3) greater emphasis on committees. It is intended the management committee will meet once a week and that reps from the committees will report to the management committee every second week. The composition of the committees will be announced when they are finalised. All meetings are open to anyone interested in attending. Key committees are those to be involved in promoting the talks proposal in the wider community (ie. within the wider ETimorese community, the peace network, party branches - ALP, Democrat, Liberal etc., churches, unions etc.). Joaquim Santos undertook to contact likely people and prepare a speaker's roster for this community contact work. A briefing seminar will be held soon for these speakers and a kit of speakers notes, material and aids prepared.

16. Next meeting: Monday, 19 August, 7.30 pm. 124 Napier St, Fitzroy.

Pat Walsh